

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1958)

Heft: 1319

Rubrik: Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Sensational achievement by Swiss watchmakers.

Visitors to the Swiss Pavilion at the Universal and International Exhibition in Brussels will be able to see, among other things, the most recent creation of scientific chronometry, namely, the molecular clock. This time-keeping unit was conceived and realised in Neuchâtel by the Swiss Laboratory for Horological Research and by the Institute for Physics attached to the University, with the help of the Swiss National Fund for Research. This apparatus, which is also called "the molecular standard", does not itself give the time, but makes it possible to control the movement of precision clocks and watches, by utilising the regular vibrations of an ammoniac molecule — vibrations at the rate of fourteen million per second. The molecular clock will attain the extraordinary precision of three hundred-thousandths of a second per twenty-four hours; it will, therefore, be three times more precise than the quartz clock, which up to the present has constituted the greatest accuracy achieved in this particular domain.

A.I.D.A.

The International Association for the Distribution of Foodstuffs will hold its 4th Congress next year in Lausanne. This meeting will provide an opportunity — as did the three previous Congresses in Paris, Ostend and Rome — for the 2,500 to 3,000 participants who are expected to attend, to examine the various techniques which are being employed and the experience acquired in the field of the distribution of foodstuffs, and to seek the best means for developing productivity in the firms and organisations concerned.

An International Exhibition is to be organised within the framework of this Congress. It will take place from 13th to 28th June 1959 within the premises of the Lausanne Fair and will comprise eleven sections — which are to be reserved for individual undertakings, but which will be complemented by a collective show intended for the edification of the public.

These two events, which are of world importance, have already reached the stage of active preparation.

The index of prices and cost of living in Switzerland.

At the end of March 1958 the index of wholesale prices in Switzerland, which includes the most important natural foodstuffs and a series of raw and supplementary materials, was set at 218.9 in comparison with 100 in August 1939. This figure compared with that of the previous month shows practically no change.

The Swiss index for consumer goods was also the same as for the preceding month. At the end of March 1958 the figure was 180.5 against 100 for August 1939. However, this figure is 2.4 per cent higher than it was in the previous year, 1957.

Swiss dye-stuffs.

Swiss exports of dye materials increased their value in 1957 by 12 per cent over 1956. About 4.4 per cent of the country's total exports were dye materials. The most important area for demand is West Europe, which accounted for more than half of these dye exports. On the other hand, exports to East European countries have again dropped, except in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Switzerland is reckoning with a continuing development in the dye trade. Especially in developing countries there is a notable — slow, but regular — rise in living standards and thus a greater demand for consumer goods. This is a development which, according to experience, will also favourably affect the dye industry. The general increase in world population also has the same tendency.

The number of telephone subscribers and radio listeners in Switzerland.

On 1st February 1958 the number of persons having telephones in Switzerland reached over 900,000. At the same time over 1,300,000 Swiss persons were registered as having paid their radio licences. This means that every fourth Swiss owns a radio set.

An institute for operational research.

Modern industry is no longer conceivable without the progress which automation and statistical resources have brought about, and Switzerland is making more and more use of them. The government of the western Swiss canton of Friburg has erected an institute where theoretical and practical work is to be done in the field of work-study and automation in

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industry and administration. This institute will be led by a specialist who is a former scholarship winner of the Rockefeller Foundation. He is to take up his duties at the beginning of this year's summer semester, and will doubtless do a great service to Swiss industry, which till now has had to train its work-duty experts abroad.

A Swiss generator for a hydro-electric centre in Portugal.

At the beginning of this year the hydro-electric centre of Picote on the River Douro in Portugal put into operation a generator manufactured in Switzerland. This machine, which has a power of 66,000 kilowatt-hours, is one of the largest generators constructed by its makers — a Geneva firm. It is equipped with a new effective-voltage regulator which was supplied by the same firm.

Important Swiss sales abroad.

A Swiss machine-making plant in Lucerne has just delivered, in collaboration with a Finnish firm, two Kaplan turbines for the Finnish power plant at Petäjäskoski, in Lapland, near the Polar Circle. These two machines figure among the largest ones of their type in Western Europe; each possesses a capacity of 67,600 h.p. and absorbs for this purpose nearly 300 cubic metres of water per second, under a fall of 19 metres.

A plant in Basle specialising in metallic construction work has obtained, as a result of an international competition, an order for the delivery of all the equipment in light metal for the new building which is to house the Central Iraq Bank, in Baghdad. The external aspect of this vast modern building will be distinguished by large window-frames and doors, by appliances intended for protection against the sun, and a canopy, all made of light metal. Inside the building, light metal is to be used for the setting up of the pay-desks and of the patented isolating partitions, which absorb sound and can be moved at will whenever the necessity arises for a sub-division of the premises. We would add that the plans for the building belonging to the Central Iraq Bank are the work of a Swiss professor.

A Swiss process for dustless coal.

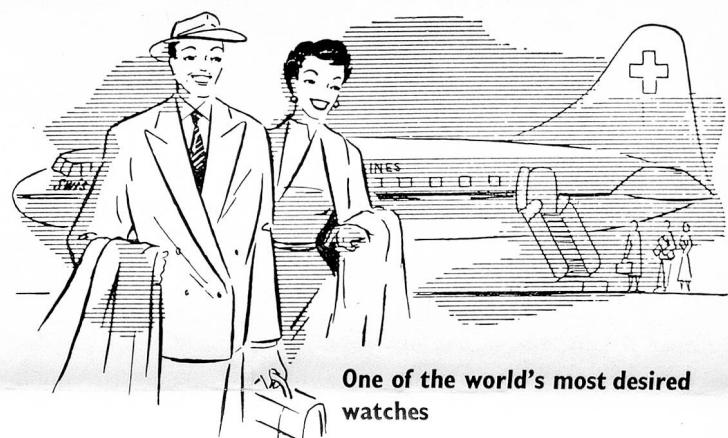
An important Swiss firm in Zurich, which deals in solid fuels, has just completed a special process which makes it possible to do away with all discharge of dust when handling coke or coal. Several Swiss firms had already manufactured machines for the purpose of preventing coal from discharging dust, but these appliances had too small an output, and also possessed some disadvantages. This was the reason why this Zurich firm commissioned a Swiss machine-making plant to build an appliance with a large output, which is now entirely satisfactory. No manual operation is required, and filling with coal is achieved by means of a crane. The coal is then sifted of all the waste and dust that it contains, and then passed into another piece of equipment, where it is vaporised by means of a very fluid and odourless oil, which agglomerates all those particles which might have a tendency towards breaking off and forming dust. After this treatment the coal is put into sacks by mechanical means, although, as it does not give off any dust, it can also be transported and sold in bulk.

NEW SWISSAIR AIR/SEA AGREEMENTS.

Swissair have recently concluded interim air/sea agreements with a number of shipping lines serving Far Eastern ports.

They are Anchor Line Ltd., British India Steam Navigation Co., Blue Funnel Line, P. & O. Steam Navigation Co. and Glen Line Ltd. Swissair already have air/sea agreements for Far East traffic with Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes and Lloyd Triestino.

Under the interim agreements, combined air/sea passages providing the usual round trip discount can now be sold between the U.K. and Ireland, and Greece, Egypt, the Lebanon, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Japan, in conjunction with Swissair Far East services.



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